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ABSTRACT

This action research project implemented and evaluated a program for establishing organizational skills, utilizing routines and tools that maximize school success. The targeted population consisted of students in four kindergarten classes in a primary school and three third-grade classes in an intermediate school. Analysis of probable cause data indicated that formal instruction of organizational skills was previously lacking. In addition, the teachers felt that a variety of factors, including absence of routine, low motivation and self-discipline, and poor time management, might negatively impact the students' success in school. A review of solution strategies resulted in the development of a systematic program of organizational skills and integration of these skills throughout the year. Through the use of common sense lessons; communication between parents, students, and teachers; goal setting; and positive reinforcement, significant gains in students' organizational skills were documented. (Twenty-six appendices include copies of parents' and staffs' questionnaires and letters, student interviews, lesson plans, teacher observation checklists, helpful hints and suggestions, and project materials. Contains 33 references.) (Author/AA)

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STRENGTHENING ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for establishing organizational skills, utilizing routines and tools that will maximize school success. The targeted population consists of four kindergarten classes in a primary school and three third-grade classes in an intermediate school. Both schools are located in a middle-class community where tremendous growth is being experienced. This community is located in the northeastern suburban sector of a large Midwestern city. The problem of poor organizational skills will be documented by staff and parent surveys, conferences, academic referrals, and teacher observations.

Analysis of probable cause data indicates that formal instruction of organizational skills was previously lacking. In addition, the teachers feel that a variety of factors, including absence of routine, low motivation and self-discipline, and poor time management, may negatively impact the students' success in school.

A review of solution strategies, suggested by experts in the field of education and an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the development of a systematic program of organizational skills, an increased instructional emphasis of these skills, and integration of these skills throughout the year.

Project results for the Strengthening Organizational Skills (S.O.S.) program were delineated. Included were the historical description of the interventions for both Sites A and B, and recommendations/conclusions for the successful acquisition of skills. Through the use of common sense lessons, communication between parents/students/teachers, goal setting, and positive reinforcement, significant gains were noted.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The students at this site have demonstrated a lack of organizational skills that negatively affect their school performance. Evidence for existence of such a problem includes teacher and parent surveys, conferences, academic referrals, and teacher observations.

Context of the Problem

Primary Site A and Intermediate Site B are involved in the following research. All statistics are from the 1994-1995 state report card. Both sites are from the same school district; therefore, the demographic information is similar.

Site A contains pre-kindergarten through second grade and is located in close proximity to the intermediate and middle school sites. As of April, 1996, the enrollment was 1,785 students. There were 45 pre-kindergarteners, 604 kindergarteners, 623 first graders, and 558 second graders. These numbers included special education students. The average class size is 28 students. Ethnic characteristics of the student population are as follows: 83.7% White Non-Hispanic, 8.25% Hispanic, 5.15% Asian-Pacific Islander, 2.75% African American, and 0.15% Native American. Low income students comprise 2.5% of the population, which is slightly below the district percentage and far below the state. The school consists of 5.4% Limited English Proficient (LEP) students. This is above the district percentage of 3.3% and slightly below the

state percentage of 5.6%. The attendance rate of the school is 94.7%. The student mobility rate is 14.4% and the truancy rate is 0.0%.

This site has 129 staff members. One hundred are certified staff and 29 are support staff. The staff is 94% female and 6% male. The average experience level of the teachers is 10.1 years, with 34% having a master's degree or above. The teacher breakdown is: 3 pre-kindergarten, 12 kindergarten, 26 first grade, and 22 second grade. Special teachers include: 6 Reading Recovery, 5 speech and language, 4 social workers, 3 English as a Second Language (ESL), 3 physical education, 2.75 music, 2 Learning Disability (LD), 2 Occupational Therapists (OT), 2 psychologists, 1 math specialist, 1 reading specialist, 1 librarian, and 1 nurse.

Major changes have been implemented in the school during the past five years. A literature-based reading program replaced the basal reading series. Strong components of this program are reading and writing workshops. Reading Recovery is part of the first grade reading program. A reading specialist supports at-risk second grade students. Another major change has been the use of manipulatives and hands-on activities in math and science. The school is in the process of a pendulum swing, from total pullout for ESL and LD programs, to inclusion. Authentic assessment is being implemented. Staff development is a key focus of the primary school. Due to population growth, the allocated class time for music, physical education, and library has been reduced.

Site B contains grades 3-5 and is located within close proximity to the primary as well as the middle school site. As of April, 1996, the enrollment in this site was 1,516 students of the district total of 4,659 students. There are 531 third graders,

492 fourth graders, and 493 fifth graders. These numbers include special education students. Ethnic characteristics of the student population are as follows: 82.8% White Non-Hispanic, 7.1% Hispanic, 5.8% Asian/Pacific Islander, 4.0% African American, and 0.4% Native American. The average class size is 28 students across all three grades. Low income students comprise 4% of the population, which is slightly above the district percentage, yet far below the state levels. This site consists of 2% Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, which is slightly below the district percentage of 3% and that of the state, which is 6%.

The attendance rate for this site is 96%, and the student mobility rate is 11%. The truancy rate is less than 1% and involves five chronic truants. The pupil/teacher ratio is 21:1. A recent increase in district enrollment has caused several changes in special classes. The time allotted for computer, music, and gym was reduced this year. Since the lunchrooms were converted into classrooms, the students eat in their own rooms. The music rooms were also converted to classrooms, necessitating music instructors to travel with carts to each classroom.

This site has 120 staff members. Ninety-nine are certified staff and 21 are support staff. The ethnicity is 99% White Non-Hispanic and 1% Asian/Pacific Islander. The staff is comprised of 90% female and 10% male. The average experience level of the teachers is 11 years. Thirty-four percent of the teachers have master's degrees or above. The teacher breakdown is: 19 third grade, 17 fourth grade, and 18 fifth grade. Special teachers include: eight Learning Disability (LD), five cross-categorical (LD,BD,EMH), three social workers, three physical education, two and one-half music, two Behavioral Disorder (BD), two speech and

language, two reading specialists, two English as a Second Language (ESL), one psychologist, one peer mediation coordinator, one Occupational Therapist (OT), one librarian, one band, one computer, and one math specialist. The average operating expenditure per pupil is $4,537, which is slightly lower than comparative elementary schools of the same type and size. This is approximately $1,000 lower than the state expenditure. The daily schedule consists of 60 minutes of mathematics, 30 minutes of science and social studies respectively, and 150 minutes of English, which includes all the areas of language arts.

According to the Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP), the school has identified planned improvement in all subject areas, as well as staff development. The goal is to provide more problem-based learning experiences across all content areas, increase student writing skills through the use of the Power Writing Process, focus on collecting math work for Performance Assessment in grades K-2, and increase learning activities in math computation for grades 3-8. Teachers focused on establishing consistent guidelines for student portfolios in Language Arts (Grades K-5) and were trained in the Power Writing Process. In-services were presented to implement three-way conference skills as a means of improving parent communication regarding student performance.

The Surrounding Community

The community is located in a northern suburb of a large midwestern city. It is 35 miles from an international airport and in close proximity to a major interstate highway system. This area encompasses 35 square miles and is comprised of several unincorporated subdivisions and small villages. Within the last

decade this community has transformed from a predominantly rural setting to a mobile, white collar, suburban community.

The population of the area is approximately 35,000. The 1990 census shows a population consisting of 93% White Non-Hispanic, 4% Hispanic, with 3% Asian/Pacific Islander, African American, and Native American. According to the district demographic analysis, the overall population of the community has grown by 54% since the beginning of the decade. Although this growth has impacted the school drastically, it has not changed the demographic or economic make-up of the community.

The level of education acquired by the adult community members is as follows: 29% are non-high school graduates, 26% are high school graduates, 24% have some college background, and 21% hold a Bachelor's degree or higher. The median family household income for this area according to the 1990 census figure is $45,000. Employment characteristics of the existing population are represented by major corporations, retail, manufacturing, amusement, health care, military, and educational fields.

The school district is unique in that it is a campus setting, in which all K-8 students are bused. It is comprised of a primary building (K-2), intermediate building (3-5), and a middle school (6-8).

The total district population is 4,700. The five-year projected enrollment is 6,408, a 59.6% increase. The student population is 82.6% White Non-Hispanic, 7.8% Hispanic, 5.9% Asian/Pacific Islander, 3.4% African American, and 0.3% Native American. Limited English Proficiency (LEP) represents 3.3% of the student population.

The faculty population is 215, 85.6% of which are female and

14.4% are male. The faculty consists of 98.2% White Non-Hispanic, 0.9% Hispanic, 0.9% Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.0% African American, and 0.0% Native American. The faculty characteristics are: 66.1% with Bachelor's degree and 33.9% with Master's degree and above. The average teaching experience is 10.1 years. There are 169 tenured teachers and 94 non-tenured teachers. The pupil-teacher ratio is 20.7:1. The pupil-administrator ratio is 398.9:1. The average teacher salary is $34,389. The average administrator's salary is $75,903. The operating expenditure per pupil is $4,537, which is slightly lower than comparative schools of the same type and size. It is approximately $1,000 lower than the state expenditure.

The district administration includes one superintendent of schools, one assistant superintendent of business services, one director of curriculum and instruction, one director of pupil personnel services, one director of building grounds and transportation, four principals, and five assistant principals.

The community is characterized by active parent involvement. The most supportive groups are Parent Teacher Association, friends of the school, and volunteers of the school. The school has a history of financial and growth concerns. Building referendums have been more successful than educational referendums. A middle school is under construction and will be ready for occupancy in August, 1997. Some issues currently under consideration are year-round school and reconfiguration of existing buildings.

Regional and National Context of the Problem

For the past several years, teachers noted that children are having difficulty organizing themselves in everyday activities. Kindergarteners appear perplexed when it comes to following a set

routine and/or developing their own routines, keeping supplies in order, completing tasks on time, having necessary supplies, and organizing their table. Third graders exhibit a lack of organization in their arrangement of workplace and materials, turning in completed assignments, having necessary supplies and setting aside time to study. According to McCarney (1994), it is imperative that students improve their organizational skills related to assignments. They should have necessary materials for assignments, return their materials to specified locations, and complete the steps of a task one step at a time.

In Judith Dodge's book, The Study Skills Handbook, she states:

> Students who are disorganized often waste a great deal of time looking for materials... and settling down to work. Since organizational skills are crucial to a child's feeling of being in control of his or her schoolwork, work on developing these skills should begin early in the year.(p.13)

Kindergarteners need to learn these skills, enabling them to take care of their own supplies, and follow directions and routines. In this way, they begin to take responsibility for their own work. By third grade, after working on these skills for a number of years, children feel comfortable in performing these tasks and completing their assignments with greater confidence and independence.

Kindergarten teachers Dorsey and Dorsey have observed the following kinds of behavior in some kindergarteners:

> Alice is a five-and-a-half-year-old twin who has attended kindergarten for six months. Although she is familiar with the set routine for each day, she encounters difficulty when attempting to carry through

> with her responsibilities. She forgets to put her papers in her folder, hang up her backpack and jacket; and get out her pencils, crayons, and paper in order to begin her work projects. Abigail is Alice's twin sister. She feels comfortable performing routine tasks established by her teacher. However, when Abigail is asked to set up her own routine, she seems to experience a lack of organizing her workplace, setting up her materials, and cleaning up.

According to Irvin and Rose (1995), third graders exhibit similar difficulties:

> Brian never has a pencil. When asked to look through his desk to find something to write with, Brian is lost in a sea of old papers, lost assignments, pieces of leftover candy, and overdue library books. Brian's class work is usually late, if it gets completed at all. He seems unaware of when tests are given or how to study for them. Homework is never turned in and Brian's parents are unsupportive. In short, Brian lacks purpose and organization.(p.3)

Additional experts, including Polloway, Patton, and Bruns, have reiterated the need to work on this intervention. According to Sheldon Berman, president of Educators for Social Responsibility, "Social responsibility is a personal investment in the well-being of others and of the planet" (1990, p.75). Berman identified several aspects of social responsibility, including, "...having organizational skills" (as cited in Costa, Bellanca, and Fogarty, 1995). The dilemma is what to do!

As researchers, we feel that in order to begin developing responsibility in today's students, we need to implement the instruction of organizational skills in our schools. In this way, the children will display confidence through independent practice of these skills in school and at home. As a result of mastering these skills, the children will become active and successful lifelong learners.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM EVIDENCE AND PROBABLE CAUSE

Problem Evidence

The following is material gathered by the researchers in regard to organizational skills at two targeted sites, Site A Kindergarten and Site B Third Grade. This documentation was provided through the use of pupil interviews and questionnaires, staff surveys, and interviews.

Site A

The targeted kindergarten group consisted of a total of four classes, two morning and two afternoon. The number of children interviewed was 100. The interviews were conducted by the researchers and took place both at the beginning of the kindergarten school year and at the conclusion of the fifth month. The children ranged in age from five-to-six years. The questions asked dealt with the kindergarteners' prior knowledge of what being organized means. During the interviewing process, the children were encouraged to participate. The interviews were conducted on an individual basis, and every attempt was made to eliminate any amount of pressure and/or negative undercurrents, and to ensure a positive feeling tone for the youngsters.

Of the 100 interviews, 79% responded that they had little or no understanding of what being organized meant. Amazingly, 19% did indicate a prior knowledge. Even though every attempt was made for all children to participate in a comfortable manner, 2% did not respond. Also, comments from the kindergarteners

interviewed in regard to what "being organized" means were found to be most informative. Some of these comments were: getting things done, cleaning up, putting everything in the same place, and being ready to do something.

Site B

The targeted third-grade group involved a total of three classes. The number of children participating in an organizational skills questionnaire was 82. These questionnaires were completed independently by the third-grade students. Directions were given by the teachers/researchers, and any questions regarding the directions were answered in a group setting. If individual students needed additional help in understanding the questionnaire, the teachers worked with them on a one-to-one basis. This questioning took place two times during a five-month period. The first questionnaire was completed during the second week of school and again at the conclusion of the fifth month. The children participating in the questionnaires ranged in age from eight to ten years. The questions asked dealt with the third graders' prior knowledge of what organizational skills were. During the questioning process, the children were encouraged to participate. Since the children's own views on organizational skills were extremely important to the researchers, everything was done to encourage a positive feeling tone on the part of the students.

From the 82 questionnaires completed, 72 children indicated some understanding of what being organized means. Even though they stated that they had some knowledge of the meaning of being organized, teachers observed that this knowledge did not transfer over to their daily activities. Ten children exhibited no

understanding of what being organized meant. All children felt comfortable in responding to the questions, regardless of whether or not they knew the answers. Then the children were asked to define what being organized means. The following are some of their explanations:

1. Being neat and tidy
2. Having a clean room
3. Having a clean desk
4. Having a place for everything
5. Making sure everything is ready
6. Knowing where your stuff is
7. Putting everything in the right spot

Lastly, the children were asked if they thought they were organized. Of the 82 children responding, 64 answered "yes" and 18 responded "no." Once again, researchers found that this information did not reflect the students' daily performance.

Staff Surveys and Interviews

Equally important in the collection of data for problem evidence was the survey completed by the staff. Colleagues involved in the survey were K-5 teachers, L.D./E.S.L. specialists, psychologists, reading specialists, social workers, administrators, and others. To entice the professionals to participate in the survey during a very hectic time of the year, the participants were given a "sweet treat" to provide both energy and an extra incentive to complete the survey. A total of 183 surveys were distributed to participants during the second week of school and were returned by the end of the week to the researchers. Survey returns numbered 104, which comprised 57% of the total participants. The survey participants were asked to

prioritize certain organizational skills in order of importance from most to least (1-most, 2-sometimes, 3-least). Results from this survey are in Table 1. These skills were designated as the most important skills at the kindergarten level: has necessary supplies, finds completed assignments, and follows the steps of the directions (assignments). This was evident in 29% of the staff surveys. The survey results for the third-grade students' most important organizational skills were: finds completed assignments, has necessary assignments, and completes work on time. This evidence was found in 37% of the staff surveys.

The staff participants were also asked if there was any evidence of a lack of organizational skills in their students. If the answer was "yes," the respondents were asked to explain their answers. Of the 104 surveys returned, 84 colleagues stated that there was evidence of a lack of skills in their students. This number comprised 81% of the total number of staff surveys. They went on to explain why they felt this way. Some of the explanations were:

1. Has difficulty following 2-or-3-step directions
2. Is unable to organize desk
3. Doesn't have supplies
4. Needs to be guided since there are so many responsibilities
5. Loses assignments or forgets them at home
6. Doesn't have a desk or work area organized for easy retrieval of materials
7. Experiences difficulty in maintaining assignment notebook

Although many respondents felt there was evidence for this

deficiency in their students' organizational skills, 10 colleagues answered "no" to this question. No explanation was given for these negative responses. The respondents were also requested to contribute any other organizational skills that might be an important part of the list. Some of the skills included were: knowing what to carry to and from school in their backpacks, practicing smooth transition from subject to subject, turning in assignments and following routines, and increasing communication between student/parent to foster student responsibility for homework.

In addition, colleagues were requested to delineate any type of organizational program they found to be useful in their classrooms. If there was a program that was of benefit to their students for the acquisition of organizational skills, the staff was asked to include it in the survey. Of the surveys returned, 60% of the respondents included some examples of successful organizational programs. The following are some of the programs that were presented:

1. Organizes day so things get done at the same time
2. Makes lists
3. Has folder system
4. Has a place for everything
5. Uses the clock
6. Lists order of assignments
7. Repeats directions
8. Reviews a great deal
9. Uses a planner
10. Has an assignment board/notebook
11. Uses a three-ring binder to organize the day's activities

Nine colleagues were then contacted and requested to participate in interviews regarding further input on students' organizational skills. These participants were asked questions specifically designed to pinpoint the cause of a lack of organizational skills at home and at school. The researchers required the participants to state what they thought was a specific cause for the lack of skills acquisition. Of the nine educators interviewed, the predominant causes listed for lack of skills at home was lack of responsibility and parents not modeling, enforcing, or implementing organizational skills. The interviewees reported to the researchers the evidence that supported their views. This evidence included: lack of time for parents to assist children in setting up work schedules for various activities, lack of time for parents to help children prioritize activities, and parents finding it easier to do things themselves instead of having children do it. Concluding with the participants' views on the lack of organizational skill development in school, the researchers found that failure to give children the opportunity to work on organizational skills and a lack of organizational skills instruction in the curriculum were overriding causes. The colleagues felt that this was true because there are so many other curricular areas to work on in school; as a result, organizational skills are dealt with on an "as needed " basis.

In conclusion, the results from the student interviews and questionnaires, coupled with the results from the staff surveys and interviews, indicated a need for instruction on organizational skills in the school's daily curriculum. Instead of working on these skills on an "as needed" basis, the researchers devised a

Strengthening Organizational Skills (S.O.S.) Program to be implemented in their kindergarten and third-grade classes.

Table 1

Staff Survey Ratings of Organizational Skills

		1 Most	2 Sometimes	3 Least
1	Has necessary materials	68%	20%	0%
2	Finds completed assignments	71%	16%	0%
3	Follows directions in order	52%	41%	0%
4	Keeps supplies and papers in order	30%	55%	0%
5	Organizes daily activities	34%	48%	0%
6	Completes tasks on time	59%	25%	10%
7	Understands time management	36%	54%	0%
8	Prioritizes activities	30%	50%	13%
9	Organizes desk/table	18%	66%	11%
10	Maintains assignment notebook	57%	30%	0%
11	Uses work folder	39%	34%	20%

Probable Cause Literature

Some authorities feel that a lack of organizational skills has many causal factors. According to Costa (1992), the complexity of skills needed to function by a responsible adult has become more and more difficult to attain. Because of the rapid amount of changes taking place in our world today due to technological developments, we now are experiencing a global awareness of what is taking place nationally and internationally. Underscoring this amazing phenomena is Dr. Norman Feingold's (1992) assertion that "half of the jobs that will be available to today's kindergarteners when they enter the work force do not yet exist" (p.209). Cetron explains that: 1) Within the next ten years the amount of knowledge will double and will double again in the following ten years; 2) Eighty-five percent of adults will be

employed in services; 3) Differences will be highly valued; and 4) Mastery of knowledge in a particular area to preclude excellence in all areas (Cetron & Davies, 1989).

The question is: How do we prepare our children to deal with all of this? Jerome Bruns (1992) attributed a lack of skills acquisition to work inhibition. Students who fall within this category are guilt ridden, apprehensive, and shy. They are usually unsuccessful because they "lack self-discipline to remain on task" (p.41). He offers a list of typical classroom behaviors of work inhibited students. This partial list is comprised of the following:

1) Is unable to finish work independently
2) Needs close supervision or help from teachers in order to complete work
3) Is unreliable
4) Gives up easily when frustrated
5) Seeks teachers' attention frequently
6) Is poorly organized
7) Forgets often or seems confused
8) Drifts off and daydreams
9) Is in own world at work time
10) Submits work that is sloppy and poorly done

In order to promote early identification of youngsters that fall within this category, these characteristics can provide teachers with a tool in deciding which children will need extra help in attaining academic self-sufficency.

Students are not always aware of the importance of school work; therefore, it is necessary for educators to establish this through activities and discussion of daily and weekly goals.

Through this goal setting, students will then be able to understand the relevance of both short- and long-term goals and what they must accomplish in order to fulfill these goals. According to Irvin and Rose (1995), "One natural outgrowth of a goal-setting discussion is time management" (p.28). When students become aware of how their time is spent, they will realize that they will have time designated not only for school work but for "fun time" as well. For example, suppose a child needs to study words for a spelling test. If he is a poor speller, he may try to procrastinate and not settle down to study. However, if he has a time management system, he will learn that he has to study these words Monday through Wednesday with a Thursday review; and by Friday he will have accomplished his goal with success. Irvin and Rose (1995) go on to say that skills learned in school have a direct correlation into real life. For instance, "organizing your desk to pay bills requires certain abilities that may fall under the heading of study skills" (Irvin & Rose, 1995, p.2).

In addition, students with organizational deficits appear to lack inner structure and the ability to begin and complete a task with success. Moskowitz (1988) delineated several suggestions to assist these children in becoming organized. A number of these recommendations included establishing routines, listing sequentially the things a child is expected to do, engaging another student to act as a model helper, teaching mnemonics, giving clues to identify important information, giving periodic checking for long-term assignments, and keeping extra folders for all handouts given in class. Although these recommendations appear rather simplistic, they do work because these plans reinforce the foundation of much needed organizational skills.

Then, too, students can encounter a lack of organizational skills not only in school but at home as well. There are a number of different tools that are suggested to assist in helping youngsters gain expertise in skills, but they often lose their usefulness due to a variety of reasons. Some of these reasons may involve a child who is living in two homes because of a family divorce or custodial situation. In this case, organizational problems can be even more paramount to deal with. Dodge (1994) recommends that communiques be sent to parents in both homes in order to make sure that the situation becomes a seemingly successful scenario. Children will then stay on top of their school work. If this is to succeed, all involved must take an active role in seeing that a positive outcome is accomplished. Dodge suggests that checklists sent to the parents will ensure that children leave each house with everything he/she needs for that day. She also recommends that children have a definitive "spot" for placing all the things that they will need in order to complete assignments. This could include the child's backpack, papers, supplies, library books, and other materials.

A given fact is that an integral part of organizational skills is learning to deal with homework in a prioritized manner. According to Canter (1987), "Getting homework finished on time is a big problem in many families. That's because all too often homework is the last thing scheduled in a child's life. Soccer, dance lessons, little league, and Scouts are attended faithfully...and punctually. Homework is often just 'squeezed in' "(p.9). This kind of "system" doesn't work. This last minute attitude towards homework sends the wrong kind of message to children. Parents must take an active role in scheduling homework

time and giving children the message that homework is number one on the list of priorities. Since this skill of scheduling homework time helps to teach children responsibility, they learn to feel good about themselves when they manage time, work independently, organize their efforts, and complete their activities in a timely fashion. With parents working closely with their children, the homework issue can be a successful adventure.

In essence, experts in the field of education appear to coincide in their beliefs that children require guidance at an early stage of development to establish organizational skills. We researchers concur strongly with their perspective; consequently, we have orchestrated a program to assist the development of organizational skills for kindergarten and third-grade students. Through monitoring this program and analyzing pertinent information, we feel that the S.O.S. program will be a worthwhile and positive venture for helping to establish these important lifelong skills.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Review of the Literature

Since students need to feel that they are an integral part of the learning process, it is important for them to acquire certain skills that will facilitate and enhance their success. Without these skills, students become disorganized, waste time, misplace materials, have difficulty settling down to do their work, and possess a general feeling of not being in control (Dodge, 1994). As organizational skills are taught, the students will learn to systematically manage their time, organize their workplace, and take responsibility for their supplies. Kops and Belmont, as well as Alley and Deshler (as cited in Slade, 1986) agree that "the effects of disorganization range from student/teacher frustration, to behavioral disruptions, to poor test performance. No wonder children who are disorganized are less likely to succeed in school than their organized peers" (p.261).

Even though these skills are found to be important in order to be successful in school, very few lessons have been designed to implement organizational skills in a child's learning environment. As researchers, we have developed a set of lesson plans to incorporate these skills into the curriculum. According to Irvin and Rose (1995), "To be successful, students must be able to organize themselves and their learning, to extract and organize information, and to demonstrate understanding and application of that knowledge at a later time" (p.2). This foundation of skills

can be established in the primary grades, beginning in kindergarten, by teaching the necessary organizational techniques and strategies. These strategies can be taught through a series of teacher-made plans that will enable the child to take control and become independent (Harries, 1986). Some of these strategies include: organization of supplies and workplace, learning a schedule, time management, goal setting, following directions, and use of assignment notebooks. Polloway and Patton further defined time management as involving "the effective use of time to complete daily assignments and carry out responsibilities. It includes allocating time and organizing the environment to effectively study, complete projects, and balance various aspects of individual schedules" (as cited in Kerr, Nelson, & Lambert, 1987, p.421).

Polloway and Patton (1993) support the need for the development of teacher-made lesson plans for organizational skills by defining organization as "arranging and managing learning activities effectively" (p. 418). They feel that it is essential for students of all ages to acquire the use of these skills. It is especially necessary at the secondary level; but in order to accomplish this objective, students need to begin the acquisition process at a very early stage of development. We as researchers will develop a schedule/routine in the very first day that the children are in attendance in order to facilitate the acquisition of organizational skills. As cited in Cummings (1988), "The first month, first week, first day, first hour of school are perhaps more important than any other in classroom management" (p.5). She goes on to state that when a teacher does not devote sufficient time to acquiring these important organizational

skills, a tremendous amount of off-task behavior will result. This will involve loss of time, confusion, lack of understanding of directions, disorientation of expectations, and the breakdown of class rules/guidelines.

According to Coil (1992), it is no longer possible to know everything in the academic areas without having good organizational skills, a time management plan, and other study skills. It is necessary for schools to implant in children the ability to foster certain skills for success. She believes that children should be helped with setting goals and assisted in seeing ways to successfully achieve these goals. She also believes that children need to have an organized study area at home and that they need to use assignment sheets, a class preparedness checklist, a "To Do List," "Assignments Completed" chart, and a way for parents to periodically check their child's notebook. In addition, Irvin and Rose (1995) emphasize that "The first step in becoming an independent learner is organization. Some students are more organized than others, but organization can be taught to all students" (p.23). Coinciding with this premise is a study skills checklist they developed which includes the components of effective study skill instruction. The checklist includes the following:

II. Gets and Stays Organized
    A. Organizes desk
    B. Maintains notebook
        1. Uses assignment notebook
        2. Uses monthly calendar
        3. Uses work folder
    C. Gets outside monitoring, if necessary

1. Gets assignment pad signed
2. Uses Friday System

D. Follows schedule

E. Organizes home studying

1. Uses quiet, comfortable place
2. Has necessary supplies
3. Sets aside time to study
4. Takes short breaks
5. Sets up study schedule to complete projects and book reports
6. Reviews notes even when there is not a test

F. Sets goals and schedules (Irvin & Rose, 1995, p.6)

Another expert opinion reinforcing the premise that organizational skills can be used as interventions is McCarney and Cummins' (1993) list of suggestions for assisting in the remediation of disorganized children:

1. Have the student question any directions.
2. Assign a peer to make sure the student has necessary materials for the day.
3. Provide the student with verbal reminders of necessary materials required for each activity.
4. Provide time at the beginning of the day for the student to organize materials.
5. Act as a model for being organized.
6. Have the student chart the number of times he/she is organized for specified activities.
7. Remind the student at the end of the day when materials are required for specified activities for the next day.
8. Establish a routine to follow.

9. Make sure the student has a container in which to carry necessary materials.
10. Provide transition time between activities.
11. Provide adequate time for the completion of activities.
12. Provide the student with structure for all academic activities.
13. Have the student maintain an assignment notebook.
14. Provide an organizer for materials.
15. Teach the student to prioritize assignments.
16. Assign the student organizational responsibilities in the classroom.
17. Establish a schedule of daily events so that the student knows exactly what to do and how much time there is in a day to do it.
18. Communicate with parents in order to share information concerning student's progress so that they can positively reinforce the student at home for being organized/ prepared for specified activities at school.
19. Establish classroom rules/guidelines.

"Organization is a key to students becoming more independent" (Irvin & Rose, 1995, p.23). This philosophy has a definite place in the home environment of each child as well. There appears to be a need to increase motivation and to develop a more efficient way of managing time for homework. For more effective learning, students need to work on not only keeping a neat desk/table, an up-to-date work folder, and an assignment sheet, but a more productive work schedule as well (Irvin & Rose, 1995). Included in the researcher's organizational handbook is a set of helpful suggestions to parents in regard to scheduling homework into their

child's life. From time to time additional ideas will be conveyed to parents through newsletters, conferences, and goal setting contracts. According to Canter and Hausner (1987),

> Homework must be a priority. Homework must have a definite place in your child's schedule. Your involvement means that you must see that homework is done appropriately every day. You can do this by instituting Daily Homework Time in your home. (p.23)

Since we are incorporating our work efforts on organizational skills at home as well as at school, we have instituted a way of informing the parents about what is taking place in school and the kinds of projects for which the children themselves are responsible. The parents are seen as an important link in the communication network.

> If parents see that home study and home practice lead to competent performance in reading or science, then children will take on that same vision. Also, if parents believe that their children must accept responsibility for their own success as learners, then children will gradually accept responsibility for their own progress. (Simic & McClain, 1992, p.80)

Although there are a number of suggestions that parents can use to help their children do well with homework, the following are some helpful hints:

1. Listen, read, and talk with your child about school work.
2. Provide structure to make home study easier to perform.
3. Prioritize activities in your child's schedule.
4. Ask him/her to talk about completed homework.
5. Discourage "cramming" the night before a test.

6. Help your child realize that writing is important.
7. Show him/her how to organize a notebook. (Simic & McClain, 1992)

Because parents can play an integral part in their child's educational success, it is important for them to assist in the establishment of a study place at home, homework system, and a special place for keeping supplies and other school related materials (Rich, 1992). Other supporters of the need for parent involvement in their child's academic success are Canter and Hausner. Canter and Hausner (1987) state that parents need to work with their child's teacher, need to back up their words with actions, and need to adhere to the following guidelines for choosing a good study location at home: "You and your child should choose the location together. Make sure it is some place close where you can be available for help (Grades K-3)" (p. 16). Canter and Hausner (1987) also state that parents should assume the following responsibilities during homework time:

1. Select a time when you or another responsible adult will be available to assist your child.
2. Try to schedule the same Daily Homework Time for all of your younger children.
3. Write down the homework hours in the designated spaces in the Daily Schedule.
4. Go over the sheet with your child, explaining what it means.
5. Post the sheet in a prominent location so that both you and your child will know exactly when homework will be done each day. (p.26)

Canter and Hausner definitely feel that an ample dose of

praise should be a part of motivating any kind of homework endeavor. Praise is not only a necessary component of any homework activity, but is a part of continued positive reinforcement that is required (and appreciated) by all children. With this in mind, children can develop a positive self-image which leads to a positive approach to working independently.

In our classes we have observed the need for children and parents to be equally involved in the learning process. In order to achieve this goal, everyone has their own job description to fulfill. With our lesson plans in place, our newsletters linking parents and home with school, our surveys assimilating information from parents and peers, our handbooks reinforcing our goals, and attention being given to the acquisition of organizational skills, success can be accomplished in a positive and enriching manner. Today's educators are establishing goals to be met for the next millennium. It is becoming increasingly apparent that there is a definite need for organizational skills in order to process the "overabundance of technologically produced information" (Costa, Bellanca, & Fogarty, 1992, p.275).

Project Outcomes and Solution Components

As a result of increased instruction of organizational skills during the period of September 1, 1996, through February 1, 1997, the targeted kindergarten and third-grade students will apply the components of organizational skill strategies in the classroom. Their progress will be measured by teacher observation checklists, conferences, periodic goal assessment by both students and teachers, and anecdotal records.

In order to accomplish the project outcomes, the following procedures are necessary:

1. Foster positive communication with parents and staff through surveys, group meetings, conferences, and newsletters.
2. Develop lesson plans to teach organizational skills through direct instruction.
3. Encourage the establishment of goal setting, both short- and long-term, in order to assist student metacognition.

Action Plan for Intervention

The following steps will be taken to implement the intervention:

I. Foster positive communication with parents and staff through surveys, group meetings, conferences, and newsletters.

A. Who

Selected staff in both primary and intermediate buildings, and the parents of the targeted kindergarten and third-grade students will be the participants. The selected staff includes psychologists, social workers, L.D. personnel, administrators, kindergarten teachers, and third-grade teachers.

B. What

Staff surveys include prioritizing organizational skills, and requesting input regarding any programs and/or suggestions for establishing these skills. Parent surveys involve a checklist comprised of "yes" and "no" answers regarding organizational skills at home, and additional space is provided for comments. These surveys were written during the summer of 1996 and are to be used as a foundation for the project

and to help determine subsequent action. Data will be shared with the participants upon request. During curriculum night, both the kindergarten and third-grade teachers will make a presentation to parents regarding their systematic plan for teaching organizational skills for the coming year. At this time the teachers will discuss the program in detail and address any questions the parents may have. The presentation will include some or all of the following, depending upon grade appropriateness: homework procedures, folder system, a study place, supply list, backpacks, and monthly newsletters. Since communication is a very important part of the three-pronged plan regarding the acquisition of organizational skills, conferencing in November will play an important role in making sure that the parents are made aware of what has taken place since the curriculum night presentation. There will be an opportunity for further dialogue and feedback surrounding the S.O.S. program. Kindergarten and third-grade children and their parents are invited to attend these conference times. In addition to communicating to the parents through surveys and curriculum night presentations, the researchers will develop a monthly newsletter that not only contains "newsy" bits of the month's happenings, but helpful suggestions regarding the establishment of organizational skills in the classroom that can be carried over into the home.

C. Why

Establishing a productive link between home and school is a must if the organizational skills program is to succeed. The information obtained from the staff and parent surveys, dialogue, and conferences are necessary in order to give the program a strong foundation and to assist in periodically assessing progress. With this in mind, the researchers will keep the communication lines open for further developments.

D. When

During the period of time from September through February, the researchers will communicate with the parents and selected staff in the aforementioned ways.

II. Develop lesson plans to teach organizational skills through direct instruction.

A. Who

The targeted kindergarten and third-grade students in the researchers' classes will participate.

B. What

Lessons will take a common-sense approach to teaching and reinforcing organizational skills in the following areas:

-desk/table (books and workbooks)

-book bag

-coat rack/chair

-supply box/baskets

-folders (their use)

-classroom procedures

-assignment book

-S.O.S. system

-a study place at home (quiet place)

-time management (routines and procedures)

-classroom schedules

These lessons will be geared to the appropriate age level. The lessons will be introduced and consistently reinforced. In addition, a bulletin board will display an accumulation of skills being practiced.

C. Why

Lessons will be orchestrated on the teaching of organizational skills to encourage the learner to be an active participant. One of the primary purposes for this skill instruction is the transfer of learning into real-life situations. Hopefully the students will continue to employ these routines and procedures toward a successful school experience. This successful acquisition of skills will release the students, allowing them to devote more time and energy toward new learning challenges.

D. When

Beginning in September, the students will receive an overview of the organizational skills program. Each week thereafter, selected skills will be introduced in small increments of learning and practiced when the need arises. As the year ensues, the students' skills will be reinforced. Many of the youngsters will be exhibiting independent practice of these skills by February. Although the data

collection will be completed at this time, the researchers will continue to emphasize the acquisition of these skills throughout the remainder of the year.

III. Encourage the establishment of goal setting, both short- and long-term, in order to assist student metacognition.

A. Who

The researchers, students, and their parents will participate in the goal setting component of the Organizational Skills Program.

B. What

Both short- and long-term goals dealing with the attainment of organizational skills will be emphasized. Goals will vary, depending on the needs of the individual students. Some of these goals are: the proper handling of supplies, organization of workplace, and responsible use of backpacks. These goals will be grade appropriate and monitored as needed.

C. Why

Because the children need to feel that they are an integral part of the three-pronged process of acquiring organizational skills, goal setting is important. It helps students stay motivated, work against discouragement, and face competition and challenge. (Rich, 1992) Students must be able to assess their own progress in school, set goals for improvement, and take responsibility for the results of their efforts. (Dodge, 1994)

D. When

Short-term goals will be established at the beginning of the school year, following the introduction of organizational skills. These goals will continue to be revised according to the needs of the students. Long-term goals will be formulated during the fall student-parent-teacher conferences. At the conclusion of the data collection, the goals will be evaluated.

Methods of Assessment

To foster an understanding of student progress, a variety of assessment tools will be utilized. Some of these tools include: observational checklists, S.O.S. workbook, rubrics, anecdotal notes, and goal setting, coupled with metacognition, conferences, and parent surveys.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to strengthen organizational skills through the common sense approach of using daily lesson plans, reinforcement strategies, S.O.S. Rap, goal-setting, and conferencing. At the very beginning of the school year, a survey was sent home to the parents of kindergarteners and third-grade students involved in the research project (See Appendices A, B, & C). Questions in this survey reflected organizational skills that the children either needed to work on or already had acquired. Parents were also given the opportunity to reflect on any additional areas that they felt should be included in organizational skills acquisition. This survey would be repeated again in the spring when further information would be required by researchers in regard to the success of the program. In order to provide further updated information, the survey would be adjusted to meet the specific needs of the research project (See Appendices D, E, & F).

In addition, the kindergarten and third-grade students participating in the research program were given a survey/interview requesting them to answer various questions and/or to recall existing knowledge of organizational skills (See Appendices G & H). The kindergarten interviews were conducted by the researchers on an individual basis. The third-grade surveys were completed by the students themselves, with the researchers

monitoring their progress. In an attempt to make sure that the children felt comfortable participating in the interviews/surveys, the researchers provided as much positive support and reinforcement as needed.

The researchers felt it was important to establish a direct line of communication with other educational professionals in the school district. This was accomplished by distributing questionnaires and conducting interviews. In this way, positive communication links were insured between students, parents, peers, and researchers (See Appendices I & J).

After the initial contact was made with the peer group, the researchers conducted interviews with selected personnel in both the primary and intermediate buildings. These individuals included psychologists, social workers, L.D. personnel, administrators, and a cross section of kindergarten, first, and third-grade teachers (See Appendix K). All of these interviews/surveys/questionnaires were conducted during the first month of school. The responses to the staff questionnaires and interviews assisted in determining the direction that the researchers would take in establishing their S.O.S program. In addition, the responses from the student surveys/interviews and parent questionnaires helped to clarify what, if any, existing knowledge the students already possessed. Because the researchers felt it was imperative to be cognizant of the students' progress both at home and at school, the interviews and surveys of parents and children were repeated at the end of the fifth month (See Appendices L & M).

After the interviews and surveys were completed, the researchers began to develop a systematic plan for teaching

organizational skills for the coming year. These plans would incorporate a common-sense approach, one that would make the transfer of skills into real-life situations much easier in the future. These lesson plans included objectives, methods, and materials (See Appendices N & O). For example, on the kindergarten level, the children would work on following directions for Bus Call. One of these lessons involved bus routines. During this time, the children became acquainted with their bus name/number. They then graphed the number of children riding a particular bus and who they were. In follow-up lessons, they would engage in various aspects of bus routines; such as, recognizing their bus name/number when called, and getting into the appropriate bus line.

In third grade, one lesson involved organizing the students' desks. The children participated in lessons in which they were instructed in the placement of their folders, books, and other materials for ready access. During unannounced desk checks, the researchers would determine which students were able to organize their desks properly.

In order to assess the progress that the kindergarten and third-grade students were making in acquiring organizational skills, the researchers developed observational checklists (See Appendices P & Q). Student progress, documented through the use of these observational checklists and anecdotal notes, provided valuable feedback on their growth. This documentation took place over a five-month period, beginning in October and ending in February. The targeted students comprised a group of 28 children from the four kindergarten classes and 21 children from the three third-grade classes. These students were chosen through teacher

observation, day-to-day performance, and information gathered from the student surveys/interviews and parent questionnaires.

Even though all of the students benefited from the lesson plans and projects, a special effort was made to establish goals for the targeted students. Conferences were held with students/parents to gain their support and input into the goal-setting process. The first conferences took place during the month of November, and the second conferences were conducted during the month of April. During the latter, the researchers discussed with the students and parents the progress that was made on individual goal setting.

Suggestions/helpful hints were compiled and distributed to the parents in the four kindergarten and three third-grade classes. These suggestions/helpful hints described various kinds of activities and ideas in which the parents could engage with their child to help establish and/or reinforce organizational skills at home (See Appendices R & S). One of the ideas utilized by both groups was the selection, with the help of parents, of a specific place to keep all supplies and materials needing to be returned to school each day (See Appendix T).

To enhance the fun aspect of acquiring organizational skills, the researchers devised an S.O.S. Rap that helped to reinforce the skills that the children would need to remember (See Appendix U). This rap would be performed by all of the students and researchers many times throughout the five-month period.

Because the researchers felt it was imperative that the parents be informed of the program content, the researchers included in their Curriculum Night presentation an explanation of the S.O.S. research program. Time was given for answering any

questions and addressing any concerns that the parents might have had.

Site A

In order to foster an understanding of what organizational skills meant, the kindergartners were requested to participate in interviews conducted by their teachers. These interviews took place at the beginning of the school year and at the conclusion of the fifth month. Since the majority of the children were not developmentally ready to participate in paper/pencil tasks, they were instructed to express their ideas verbally as the researchers recorded their responses. The questions asked were primarily designed to extract any prior knowledge they might have concerning organizational skills. A positive feeling tone was maintained through the use of praise and reassurance.

The kindergarteners interviewed readily described their ideas of what being organized meant. Because it was important to find out the extent of the students' prior knowledge about organizational skills, the interviewing process took place over several days to ensure accuracy.

Since 79% of the 100 students interviewed indicated a lack of the meaning of organizational skills, the researchers determined that there was definitely a need for skill instruction. The children to be involved in the organizational skills instruction process were five and six years old. Although the entire class was involved in the lesson workbook, a number of children were specifically targeted. These children were monitored closely over a five-month period, through the use of observational checklists and anecdotal notes, to determine the extent of their skills acquisition. Some of the time children were involved in small

skill-group endeavors, while at other times they functioned as members of larger groups.

Lesson plans were designed to provide practice in organizational skills (See Appendix V). These lesson plans included the following skill areas:

1. Attends to task
2. Has necessary supplies
3. Organizes table
4. Follows directions
5. Keeps supplies in order
6. Completes tasks on time
7. Returns materials promptly
8. Follows bus routine
9. Uses folders appropriately

Although this list was comprised of nine skills, the researchers felt that, due to the age of the participants and their stage of development, only five areas would be emphasized:

1. Has necessary supplies
2. Organizes table
3. Follows directions
4. Completes tasks on time
5. Follows bus routine

A hands-on approach was taken when designing the lesson plans, thereby enabling the kindergarteners to be active participants in the learning process. Skill-developing strategies were integrated with the existing kindergarten curriculum. These strategies included: cooperative learning, modeling, differentiated instruction, pair/share grouping, and multiple intelligences. Rubrics were established to assist in the assessment process (See

Appendix W). Some of these rubrics were designed to be administered individually, while others were group oriented.

The children were invited to create workbooks emphasizing the skills being practiced, and participate in S.O.S. Rap activities. Schedules were established and reinforced daily. These schedules were arranged on the chalkboard and color-coded to distinguish one activity from another.

Site B

The third-grade students participated in surveys designed to obtain any prior knowledge they had of organizational skills. These surveys took place at the beginning of the school year; and due to a need for assessing success, the surveying process would take place again at the conclusion of the fifth month. In order to facilitate the children's positive feeling tone, since directions were given in a group setting, all questions were answered on a one-on-one basis. Although the students stated that they understood what being organized meant, the researchers felt that their daily performance did not demonstrate this knowledge. The children involved in the survey were between the ages of eight and nine years old.

Lesson plans were designed to assist in the implementation of the S.O.S. program (See Appendix X). Twenty-one children were specifically targeted to provide feedback in regard to the success of the organizational skills program. These lessons included the following skills:

1. Is organized
2. Has supplies
3. Organizes desk
4. Follows a schedule

5. Uses an S.O.S. spot
6. Uses folders
7. Develops a routine
8. Manages time
9. Follows class rules
10. Uses an assignment notebook
11. Sets goals

These lesson plans were woven into the framework of the existing third-grade curriculum. Strategies utilized in the developed lesson plans included:

1. Cooperative learning
2. Pair/sharing
3. Differentiated instruction
4. Multiple intelligences
5. Goal setting
6. Conferencing
7. Common sense lesson plans
8. S.O.S. Rap

The students participated in completing S.O.S.workbooks that emphasized the skills being practiced. They were also active members in the S.O.S. Rap activities. Daily encouragement was given to ensure the successful acquisition of the targeted skills through the use of an "Organize-O-Meter" (See Appendix Y). Using this display, the children were kept aware of their overall success with the program. The bulletin board display was changed periodically to reflect student progress in organizational skills. The targeted students were monitored through the use of observational checklists and anecdotal notes. Some of the time, the students were involved in small skill-group activities, while

at other times they were members of larger groups.

Researchers felt strongly that the successful acquisition of skills would free the students and allow them to devote their time and energy to new learning challenges. In addition, the children would now be better prepared to incorporate these skills into the day-to-day activities of real-life situations.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to make the comparison of results more consistent, the tools that were utilized in September were also used at the conclusion of the fifth month. There were some changes made in order to facilitate the compilation of data at the conclusion of the S.O.S. program. The results are explained by site.

Site A

From the beginning of the research project, it was readily apparent to the researchers that daily and consistent reinforcement would be an important tool toward kindergarteners' organizational skills acquisition. Since the majority of the children had no clear understanding of what being organized meant, the researchers felt that it was necessary to model the skills for the students. In daily activities, the researchers reinforced the concept of a schedule, including the instruction of time management skills. The children became accustomed to using a timer to help them gauge the time remaining to complete certain projects/activities.

The parents were also asked for their input into the S.O.S. program. Parent surveys were distributed during the first week of school and carried home by the kindergarten students. These surveys were placed in manila envelopes labeled with the logo of the organizational skills curriculum, namely, Strengthening

Organizational Skills, or S.O.S., and were decorated by the kindergarteners. By using these envelopes, the parents hopefully would develop a routine for returning S.O.S. materials to school.

Parents were surveyed with a purpose of encouraging them to be an integral part of the communication process. The survey questions were to be marked either "yes" or "no" to reflect their child's organizational skills. The list is as follows:

1. Has a favorite place to study
2. Has necessary supplies
3. Organizes table
4. Follows directions
5. Keeps supplies in order
6. Completes tasks on time
7. Returns materials promptly to school
8. Follows bus routine

A significant "yes" response was registered to these three skills:

1. Has necessary supplies (95%)
2. Follows directions (89%)
3. Follows bus routine (82%)

Also, the following skills were listed as not being part of their child's organizational skills:

1. Has a favorite place to study (50%)
2. Organizes table (36%)
3. Keeps supplies in order (34%)

In addition, the parents were requested to add any other skills they felt might be an important part of organization. Some of the skills mentioned were:

1. Returns toys to proper place
2. Is neat

3. Has set times and guidelines
4. Reflects parents' organizational skills
5. Gets clothes ready for the next day - arranges them neatly on the bed
6. Verbally lists order of plans

Some parents indicated other ways that they use to assist in organization:

1. Token economy system
2. Proper nutrition and rest
3. Parental involvement and support

Through observation, the researchers were able to select approximately 7 out of 23 children in each morning class and 7 out of 27 children in each afternoon class who demonstrated a need for organizational skill instruction. This number represents 28% of the children enrolled in all four classes. The researchers felt that these children would benefit from the structured organizational skills program that would include lessons, routines, S.O.S. workbooks, and scheduled activities. Consistent reinforcement of the skills would be practiced in various teacher-made plans. These plans included instruction in the following skills:

1. Follows bus routine
2. Organizes table
3. Has necessary supplies
4. Follows directions
5. Completes tasks on time

Observations on each student were recorded on an individual calendar.

Since the researchers felt that parents are an important link

in the establishment of organizational skills, three-way (student, parent, and teacher) conferencing was conducted in the fall. The information obtained from the conferences was to be used to assist in developing lessons that would be utilized toward the successful acquisition of organizational skills. Input was requested from both children and parents. The researchers emphasized that goals be realistic and attainable. After goals were established, the researchers used positive reinforcement for goal achievement. The researchers further stated that a maximum of two goals per child should be emphasized. A follow-up conference was planned for April to inform the parents of the extent of their child's success in the program. There would also be discussion in regard to the formulation of goals for the forth-coming year. This goal-setting activity would again include students, parents, and teachers. The individually developed S.O.S. workbooks would be an excellent tool for review of organizational skills in the ensuing summer months.

The second Kindergarten parent questionnaire was sent home via the kindergarteners during the last week of the fifth month of the S.O.S. research project. At this time, the parents were requested once again to answer "yes" or "no" to reflect their child's organizational skills. Of the 100 parent questionnaires sent home, 88 were returned. The results indicated that 92% of the kindergarteners had overwhelming success in acquiring the following skills:

1. Has necessary supplies
2. Organizes table
3. Follows bus routine

The following skills, however, were found to be not yet a part of their child's repertoire:

1. Completes tasks on time
2. Follows directions

Of special interest to the researchers were the comments of the parents, including:

1. Greatly improved attention span and initiation of organization
2. Noticeable progress since September
3. Assisted immeasurably in returning library books
4. Increased awareness of location of backpack and other materials
5. Better understanding of procedures

The researchers felt that this additional information was invaluable in helping to further aid in the success of the S.O.S. program.

Student interviews were also conducted in the final month of the research project timeline. The kindergarteners once again responded to the questions about what being organized meant, and whether or not they thought they were organized. Of the 100 kindergarteners interviewed, 76% felt comfortable in stating their definitions of what being organized meant, and their opinions about these skills. It was of special interest to the researchers that the two morning classes and two afternoon classes represented a definite dichotomy in their answers. The morning classes comprising 46 students stated unequivocally that they understood the meaning of being organized. This number represented 74% of the 46 students interviewed. Of the 54 students in the afternoon

classes, 42 students, or 78%, stated that they felt they were organized, but they could not explain the meaning of the words. The one explanation for this incongruous situation seemed to stem from differences existing between the level of development, as well as the level of social/emotional maturity of the children in the two sessions. Although the kindergarteners cited examples of how they were organized, some children needed assistance qualifying their answers. Also, the researchers felt that the observational checklists indicated that the day-to-day performance of targeted children exemplified an improvement in: following the bus routine, keeping their desk organized, and having necessary supplies. The skills still requiring additional work were: following directions and completing tasks on time. The researchers reported these findings to the parents during conferences in April. They also indicated that these particular skills would be reinforced in first grade.

Site B

Even though the researchers found the third graders' responses to the second questionnaire to be quite favorable concerning what being organized meant, they felt that the students' day-to-day performance lacked a transfer of that knowledge. Therefore, the researchers felt it was necessary to establish lesson plans that would help the youngsters to successfully accomplish the acquisition of these skills.

During the second week of school, parent surveys were distributed to the children. Since the parents were to be an integral part of the communication process toward establishing organizational skills, they were encouraged to participate in the surveys. The survey questions dealt with items that would reflect

their child's organizational skills:

1. Uses quiet, comfortable place to study
2. Has necessary supplies
3. Sets aside time to study
4. Takes short breaks
5. Sets up study schedule to complete projects and book reports
6. Reviews notes even when there is not a test
7. Turns in completed assignments
8. Follows the steps of the assignments in order
9. Keeps supplies in order
10. Completes tasks on time
11. Organizes desk
12. Dresses for the weather

The third graders carried the parent questionnaires home in manila envelopes labeled with the S.O.S. logo and decorated by the students. It was hoped that the parents would become accustomed to the routine of returning the S.O.S. materials to school in the accompanying envelopes. The use of the special envelopes also served the purpose of giving the entire S.O.S. program more importance in the parents' eyes. Highlights of the results of the parent surveys were as follows:

A significant "yes" response was registered to these five skills:

1. Has necessary supplies (97%)
2. Dresses for the weather (97%)
3. Turns in completed assignments (96%)
4. Follows the steps of the assignments in order (91%)
5. Completes tasks on time (87%)

Also, these skills were listed as not being part of their child's organizational skills:

1. Reviews notes even when there is not a test (61%)
2. Sets up a study schedule to complete projects and book reports (48%)
3. Takes short breaks (35%)

After having established an observational checklist covering certain criteria, the researchers selected approximately 7 out of 28 children in each third-grade class. The number of children observed represents 25% of the students enrolled in three third-grade classes. The researchers felt that these children would benefit from a structured organizational skills program including lessons, routines, S.O.S. workbooks, scheduled activities, and consistent reinforcement of the skills taught. During a five-month period, researchers observed this targeted group for organizational skills practiced as a result of their teacher-made lessons. In order to record teacher observations, a monthly calendar was used for each student.

Since parents were included as an important link in the establishment of organizational skills, three-way (student, parent, and teacher) conferences were conducted in the fall of the school year. The information obtained at the conferences was used to assist in establishing skill areas that would be emphasized to ensure the successful acquisition of organizational skills. Input was requested from both children and parents, as well as teachers. Researchers monitored the construction of realistic and accessible goals. After the goals were written, the researchers made use of positive reinforcement to ensure the success of goal achievement. The researchers further stated that a maximum of two goals per

child should be emphasized.

Questionnaires were sent to third-grade parents during the conclusion of the five-month S.O.S. research project. At this time, the parents were once again asked to mark either "yes" or "no" to reflect their child's organizational skills. Of 84 questionnaires sent home, 79, or 94%, were returned. The parents felt that the following organizational skills were successfully mastered by their child:

1. Has necessary supplies
2. Turns in completed assignments
3. Follows the steps of the assignments in order
4. Dresses for the weather

The parents listed the following skills as ones that still required practice:

1. Reviews notes even when there is not a test
2. Organizes desk
3. Sets up study schedule to complete projects/book reports

In addition, parents were asked to give any suggestions that might improve the organizational skills program. These comments included:

1. Make a "Don't Forget" list
2. Write in assignment notebook when textbook should be brought home

The researchers felt that this data was valuable in helping the S.O.S. program to succeed.

The third-grade students were surveyed in regard to their knowledge of organizational skills. The students were to define what being organized meant and indicate whether or not they thought they were organized. Of the 84 children surveyed, 100%

overwhelmingly stated that they knew what being organized meant, and 74, or 88%, indicated that they felt they were organized. Furthermore, they cited examples of the ways in which they were organized:

1. Keeps desk in order
2. Puts backpack in a safe spot
3. Has everything in its place
4. Uses assignment notebook

Observational checklists and anecdotal notes provided the following data on the targeted students:

1. Is organized (67%)
2. Has supplies (62%)
3. Organizes desk (57%)
4. Follows a schedule (100%)
5. Uses folders (100%)
6. Develops a routine (62%)
7. Manages time (57%)
8. Follows class rules (90%)
9. Uses an assignment notebook (86%)
10. Sets goals (67%)

The researchers felt that the primary causes for the lack of student success in attaining these organizational skills were due to: behavior deficits, poor attitude toward school endeavors, lack of motivation, developmentally falling within the lower range of the maturity scale, and poor self-concept. These characteristics might have played an important role in the inability of some students to acquire part, or all, of the skills listed above.

During conferences in April, parents would be informed of the

extent of their child's success in the S.O.S. program. The researchers would also delineate those skills still needing practice.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Site A

The researchers conclude that, with the use of the aforementioned strategies, coupled with early intervention in organizational skill development, daily planning, and continual reinforcement, success in the acquisition of organizational skills could be accomplished. It was evident that the kindergarten students at first did not have knowledge about how to organize themselves, their projects, and their daily schedules. It was also obvious, that although kindergarteners could demonstrate what being organized meant, they did not necessarily know how to define the word "organized." It was apparent to the researchers that, with constant use of praise and recognition, the children began to feel confident in their tasks, and therefore were more likely to continue practicing these skill-oriented activities.

In order to accomplish organizational skill building at home as well as at school, the researchers found that parent involvement was an important component. With abundant hints/suggestions to parents from researchers, most parents realized the magnitude of their role in their child's acquisition of organizational skills in the home setting. The researchers determined that organizational skills can only be learned successfully when a partnership between home and school is developed.

The developmental and maturity level of each child are important factors to be taken into account before any attempt at

establishing an organizational skills program can be implemented. If a child is not "age appropriate" for a specific skill acquisition, more reinforcement of that skill is needed. The earlier the schools begin organizational skills instruction, the earlier each child will attain success. Even though continual reinforcement was given to help students follow directions and finish tasks on time, it was clear that these areas were dependent on the developmental stage of each child, and would only become as strong as the individual's ability to work on them.

In conclusion, the researchers found that success was achieved in the acquisition of organizational skills only when the kindergarteners, their parents, and teachers were included in the process. The S.O.S. program has worked for some and can work for others, maybe not overnight, but with time!

Site B

It was evident to the researchers that the third-grade students' success in the acquisition of organizational skills was directly related to the time and effort expended by all involved in the S.O.S. project. Although the third-grade students appeared confident at the onset of the program and felt that they were organized, their daily activities/routines seemed to belie that fact. This contradiction was apparent in the students' inability to organize their desks and supplies, and manage their time, and complete their assignments.

The researchers definitely felt that in order to accomplish the successful organizational skill building at school, the home would need to be an integral part as well. In order to develop this positive partnership between home and school, the researchers shared helpful hints/suggestions, in addition to giving ample

doses of organized lesson plans and reinforcement to the third graders at school.

Also, the researchers realized the importance of maintaining a strong positive self-concept; consequently, they constantly utilized praise and recognition in their efforts to instruct the students in skill development. Some of the third graders required consistent monitoring of their skill acquisition. These students were primarily at the lower end of the developmental maturity range. These third graders were found to be less motivated and inclined to let someone else "do it" for them. Although the majority of the students indicated progress in a variety of skill areas, the researchers felt that the areas of having necessary supplies and preparing for tests needed further work. Students needed a structured format and repeated reminders to be aware of supplies and steps in test preparation.

In conclusion, the researchers decided that third graders did benefit from direct instruction in organizational skills building. They felt that the involvement of the home was an important investment in making sure that success was accomplished. Don't forget - anything worth doing is worth doing right! This means a united effort by students, parents, and teachers for establishing organizational skills, not just for today, but for every day.

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APPENDIX A

COVER LETTER FOR PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE K/3

September 4, 1996

Dear Parents,

As part of our Master's Program in Education, we are writing an action research paper on organizational skills for Kindergarten and Third Grade students. We are requesting your assistance in completing the attached survey. We would appreciate you returning the survey to us by Friday, September 6, 1996. THANK YOU in advance for your help and precious time. We will be happy to share our paper and the results of this survey with you once it is completed.

Sincerely,

Mrs.Brito
Miss Sharon Dorsey
Miss Sheila Dorsey
Mrs.House
Mrs.Nauke

APPENDIX B

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE K (AUG.)

Kindergarten Organizational Skills Parent Checklist[62]

Please check those items that reflect you child's organizational skills.

	Yes	No
1. Has a favorite place to study.	_____	_____
2. Has necessary supplies.	_____	_____
3. Organizes table.	_____	_____
4. Follows directions.	_____	_____
5. Keeps supplies in order.	_____	_____
6. Completes tasks on time.	_____	_____
7. Returns material promptly to school.	_____	_____
8. Follows bus routine.	_____	_____

Is there anything else that you could add to this list of organizational skills?
If so please do.

APPENDIX C

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE 3RD (AUG.)

Third Grade Organizational Skills Parent Checklist

Please check those items that reflect your child's organizational skills.

	Yes	No
I. Uses quiet, comfortable place to study	_____	_____
2. Has necessary supplies	_____	_____
3. Sets aside time to study	_____	_____
4. Takes short breaks	_____	_____
5. Sets up study schedule to complete projects and book reports	_____	_____
6. Reviews notes even when there is not a test	_____	_____
7. Turns in completed assignments	_____	_____
8. Follows the steps of the assignments in order	_____	_____
9. Keeps supplies in order	_____	_____
10. Completes tasks on time	_____	_____
11. Organizes desk	_____	_____
12. Dresses for the weather	_____	_____

Is there anything else that you could add to this list of organizational skills? If so please do.

APPENDIX D

PARENT LETTER K/3 (FEB.)

February 27, 1997

Dear Parents,

At the beginning of the school year you completed a checklist concerning your child's Organizational Skills. It's now time to complete it again as you think about your child and how he/she has progressed over the past six months. We hope you have noticed some improvement as we continue to guide the students toward better organization of their lives both at school and at home.

Thank you for your time. Please send the questionnaire back to school with your child in the envelope provided.

Sincerely,

Miss Sharon Dorsey

Miss Sheila Dorsey

Mrs. Brito

Mrs. House

Mrs. Nauke

APPENDIX E

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE K (FEB.)

Kindergarten Organizational Skills Parent Checklist

Please check those items that reflect your child's organizational skills.

	Yes	No
1. Has necessary supplies	_____	_____
2. Organizes table	_____	_____
3. Follows directions	_____	_____
4. Completes tasks on time	_____	_____
5. Follows bus routine	_____	_____

At this time of year, have you observed that your child has either improved in, or successfully acquired these organizational skills?

APPENDIX F

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE 3RD (FEB.)

Third Grade Organizational Skills Parent Checklist

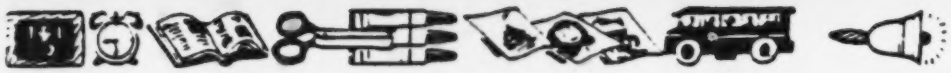
Please check those items that reflect your child's organizational skills.

	Yes	No
1. Use quiet, comfortable place to study	_____	_____
2. Has necessary supplies	_____	_____
3. Sets aside time to study	_____	_____
4. Takes short breaks	_____	_____
5. Sets up study schedule to complete projects/book reports	_____	_____
6. Reviews notes even when there is not a test	_____	_____
7. Turns in completed assignments	_____	_____
8. Follows the steps of the assignments in order	_____	_____
9. Keeps supplies in order	_____	_____
10. Completes tasks on time	_____	_____
11. Organizes desk	_____	_____
12. Dresses for the weather	_____	_____

Are there any suggestions that you may have to improve our organizational skills program?

APPENDIX G

KINDERGARTEN INTERVIEW (AUG.)



Organizational Skills S.O.S. Student Interview

Name_____Date_____

Questions

1. Do you know what **"being organized"** means?

   yes_____ no_____

2. What does **" being organized "** mean?

_____

_____

3. Do you think you are **organized?**

   yes _____ no_____

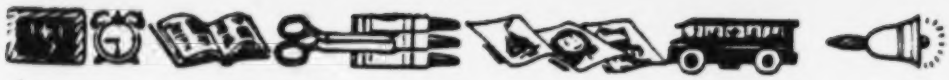
4. In what ways are you **organized?**

_____

_____

APPENDIX H

3RD GRADE QUESTIONNAIRE (AUG.)



Organizational Skills S.O.S. Student Questionnaire

Name_____Date_____

Questions

1. Do you know what **"being organized"** means?

   yes_____ no_____

2. What does **" being organized "** mean?

_____

_____

3. Do you think you are **organized?**

   yes _____ no_____

4. In what ways are you **organized?**

_____

_____

APPENDIX I

STAFF LETTER K/3

September 4, 1996

Dear Colleague,

As part of our Master's Program in Education, we are writing an action research paper on organizational skills for Kindergarten and Third Grade students. We are requesting your assistance in completing the attached survey. We would appreciate you returning the survey to us by Friday, September 6, 1996. THANK YOU in advance for your help and precious time. We will be happy to share our paper and the results of this survey with you once it is completed.

Sincerely,
Gail Brito
Sharon Dorsey
Sheila Dorsey
Pam House
Margaret Nauke

P.S. Here is a treat for being so sweet!

APPENDIX J

STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE K/3

Staff Organizational Skills Survey

Please check one then circle building or grade level

_____ Building: Primary / Intermediate

_____ Teacher: K 1 2 3 4 5 LD ESL Gifted Other

_____ Administrator: Primary / Intermediate

_____ Psychologist

_____ Social Worker

1. Do you feel there is evidence of a lack of organizational skills in your students?
_____YES _____NO
If yes, please explain_____

_____

_____

2. Please prioritize the following skills in order of importance in your opinion from most to least.
Ex:(1-Most, 2-Sometimes, 3-Least)

1 2 3 _____Has necessary materials.

1 2 3 _____Finds completed assignments.

1 2 3 _____Follows the steps of the (directions) assignments in order.

1 2 3 _____Keeps supplies and papers in order.

1 2 3 _____Organizes daily activities.

1 2 3 _____Completes tasks on time.

1 2 3 _____Understands time management.

1 2 3 _____Prioritizes activities.

1 2 3 _____Organizes desk/table

1 2 3 _____Maintains assignment notebook.

1 2 3 _____Uses work folder (project).

(Please turn over)

3. Are there any other organizational skills that you might add to this list?

If so, please explain_____

_____

_____

4. How could you help your students foster organizational skills?

_____

_____

_____

5. Have you developed your own special system of organizational skills that works for you?

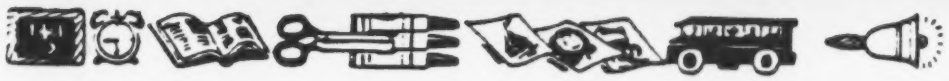
If so, would you please describe below._____

_____

_____

APPENDIX K

STAFF INTERVIEW K/3



Organizational Skills S.O.S. Staff Interview

Name_____ **Date**_____

Position_____

What would you say is the most significant cause of the lack of organizational skills in children today?

I. At home?_____

_____

Why?_____

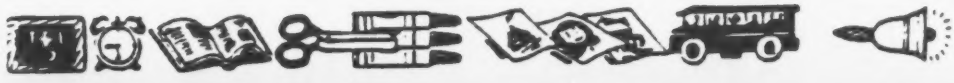
_____

2. At school?_____

_____

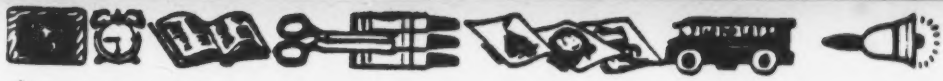
Why?_____

_____



APPENDIX L

KINDERGARTEN INTERVIEW (FEB.)



Name_____Date_____

Questions

1. Do you know what **"being organized"** means?

   yes _____ no _____

2. Give an example of a way you can be **organized?**

_____

_____

3. Do you think you are **organized?**

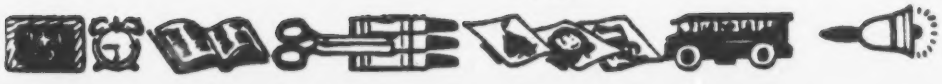
   yes _____ no _____

4. Give examples to support your answer.

_____

_____

_____



APPENDIX M

THIRD GRADE QUESTIONNAIRE (FEB.)

Organizational Skills S. O. S. Student Questionnaire 34

Name_____ Date_____

Questions

1. Do you know what **"being organized"** means?

   yes _____ no _____

2. Give an example of a way you can be **organized?**

_____

_____

3. Do you think you are **organized?**

   yes _____ no _____

4. Give examples to support your answer.

_____

_____

_____

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APPENDIX N

LESSON PLANS K

Strengthening Organizational Skills

Teacher Guide

Sharon Dorsey
Sheila Dorsey
August 1996

All on the Table Before You

Lesson Plan (Introduction)

Objective: The child will organize his/her table.

Materials: Sing: "All on the Table Before You"

Baskets
Crayons
Glue sticks
Scissors
Pencils
Markers

Directions: The child will:

1. Sit on the rug.
2. Discuss the supplies on the table.
3. Talk about how to organize the supplies on the table.
4. Listen as the teacher sings the song.
5. Sing the song.
6. Go to the table.
7. Practice organizing their supplies.

*Review actively every day.

Messy Room 88

Lesson Plan (Review)

Objective: The child will organize his/her table.

Materials: Book: Messy Room
Baskets
Crayons
Glue sticks
Scissors
Pencils
Markers

Directions: The child will:

1. Sit on the rug.
2. Listen to the story Messy Room.
3. Discuss how to keep things neat and organized.
4. Metacognate about what he/she does with table supplies.
5. Participate in table game for organizing supplies.
6. Take turns being an "environmental engineer" for his/her table.
7. Remember to be responsible for his/her own supplies at the table.

* Environmental engineer is a caretaker of the table and its supplies.

APPENDIX O

LESSON PLANS 3RD

S.O.S.

STRENGTHENING ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

TEACHER GUIDE

WRITTEN BY:
GAIL BRITO
PAMELA HOUSE
MARGARET NAUKE

3RD. GRADE
AUGUST 1996

(WB pp. 1, 2)

Lesson: Being Organized

A. Information
   A. Brainstorm in whole group possible definitions of "Being Organized." Teacher will give personal exs.
   B. Teacher will guide student discussion of "Being Organized."

II. Activity
   A. Web - Teacher models ex. organizing your bedroom.
   B. Independent web worksheet of classroom organizational actions.

III. Reflection
   A. Partner Pair/Share of webs.
   B. Partners write a definition .
   C. Whole class definition.

IV. Extension
   A. Discuss with family one way you are going to be better organized and practice it.
   B. Make a slogan on "Getting Organized" for the classroom door.

APPENDIX P

TEACHER OBSERVATION CHECKLIST/ANECDOTAL RECORD K

Teacher Observation Record (S.O.S.)

Child's Name: _____ Month _____

93

1. Attends to task.
2. Has necessary supplies.
3. Organizes table.
4. Follows directions.
5. Keeps supplies in order.
6. Completes tasks on time.
7. Returns materials promptly.
8. Follows bus routine.
9. Uses folder appropriately.

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY

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APPENDIX Q

TEACHER OBSERVATION CHECKLIST/ANECDOTAL RECORD 3RD

Teacher Observation Record (S.O.S.)

Student Name:_____ **Month**_____ 95

1	Attends to task.
2	Has necessary supplies.
3	Turns in completed assignments.
4	Follows the steps of the assignments in order.
5	Organizes desk. (inside)
6	Keeps supplies in order.
7	Completes tasks on time.
8	Maintains assignment notebook.
9	Uses folders appropriately.
10	Understands time management
11	Dresses for the weather.
12	Has gym shoes and is ready for gym on time.
13	Has tools in order every morning.
14	Returns money and papers needing signature on time.
15	Follows morning routine within a reasonable amt. of time.
16	Clears desk top to get ready to begin new task.
17	Brings lunch daily.
18	Comes to school on time.
19	Follows procedures for sharpening pencils and getting drinks.
20	Upon entering classroom follows a.m. routine in timely manner.

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY

APPENDIX R

LETTERS/HELPFUL HINTS/SUGGESTIONS K

Dear Kindergarten Parents,

Here are some "helpful" hints for helping your child develop organizational skills. Keep in mind that children learn by modeling those around them and by doing things over and over again. A little help today can mean the difference between success and failure tomorrow.

PLEASE REMEMBER - WE APPRECIATE ALL YOU DO! HAVE A GREAT DAY!!!!

Sincerely,

Sharon & Sheila Dorsey

S. O. S. Hints

1. "A Place for Everything" - Young children need to be told how to organize. We can't always expect them to know. You might want to purchase assorted colored baskets and/or colored stickers and sort everything in the room by color. Arrange things by categories in the drawer with the blue dot and books on the shelf with the green dot. This helps to lay the groundwork for good organizational skills.
2. "Don't Leave Home Without It" - You can set a table/ bench/chair by the front door for anything that has to go to school. For example: books, school bags, keys, lunches, permission slips, notes, notebooks, and folders.
3. "Same Time" - Routines make for consistency. Children who observe routines through the day will observe routines at night vice versa. Structure and routines including regular meals and bedtimes form the foundation for learning!

APPENDIX S

LETTERS/HELPFUL HINTS/SUGGESTIONS 3RD

How to help your child keep track of assignments

All homework starts life as an assignment, given by a teacher to a child. Unfortunately, many assignments get lost, misplaced, or misunderstood somewhere between school and home.

Unless you live in the Bermuda Triangle, there's really no reason why assignments can't arrive home in the same condition they left school. All it takes is a few new habits — and a few useful organization tools.

- **A bookbag**

  A bookbag is an absolute must where homework is concerned. You child's should be prepared every night before school and left in a convenient, regular place for pickup in the morning.

  Shopping for a bookbag can be an enjoyable parent-child outing. As much as possible, respect your child's wishes where style is concerned; certain bookbags may be "in" at school, while other are definitely "out." An unpopular bookbag stands an excellent chance of "disappearing."

- **Notebooks**

  Children should have notebooks which facilitate organization. Large looseleaf binders with subject separators, envelopes for loose papers, and pencil cases can encourage a child to keep supplies and assignments in order. It's harder to lose or forget a looseleaf binder than a series of thin individual folders.

  Again, let your child participate in the buying decision. Many children love to pick out their own notebooks and pencil cases, put things neatly where they belong, and show off their new acquisitions to their friends.

  Shopping for supplies can also be an opportunity to add any "extras" to your child's home study center. A stapler, a tape dispenser, a paper punch, and a ruler can all be purchased fairly inexpensively. Label them with your child's name and declare them "hands-off" to the rest of the family. Little touches like these mean a lot to a child.

- **A calendar**

  Many looseleaf binders come equipped with school-year (or all-year) calendars. If your child's doesn't, you may want to consider purchasing a teacher's planning calendar (available in school and office supplies stores) for recording short-term and long-term assignments. This can be inserted in the front of your child's looseleaf binder, with assignment due dates circled.

- **Assignment sheets**

  Your child's teacher may provide these. If not, feel free to make several photocopies of the sample assignment sheets found on pages 139 and 141. Slip these into your child's looseleaf binder just ahead of the calendar, then make sure that they're kept up to date.

And there you have it — instant organization!

Setting up a home study center

One of us grew up with three brothers and sisters. Everyone had a special place for doing homework. One claimed the dining room table, another retreated to our parents' study, and the other two worked in their bedrooms.

Deciding *where* your child should do homework is as important as deciding *when* it should be done. Learning styles differ from child to child, and the study center should allow for these differences. Some points to consider include:

- **Lighting**

  Good lighting is always important, but some children prefer brighter lights than others. Any child with his or her own desk should have a desk lamp.

- **Seating**

  Good posture helps concentration. This isn't to say that your child can't slump into a beanbag chair to read a story, but for optimum attention to homework, a straight-backed chair at a table or desk is best.

- **Noise**

  Although some children can study in the midst of TVs and radios blaring, other children playing, dogs barking, and parents conversing, it's better if the study center is relatively quiet. If possible, it should be located away from where distracting toys are kept. A "Do Not Disturb" sign can add a nice touch.

- **Materials**

  Often the first few minutes of homework time are wasted as children search the house for materials they need. You can put an end to this by stocking the home study center with writing instruments, erasers, paper, notecards, paper clips, pencil sharpeners, White-Out, and other supplies. Make a small chalkboard or slate available for exercises that would normally be done on scratch paper, and hang a bulletin board for posting calendars, important notices, and directions for special projects.

- **References**

  The study center should include a small reference library. For children in first grade, we suggest a "pictionary"; for children above first grade level, supply a dictionary written at a level your child can understand. (Good elementary dictionaries include the Ginn, Macmillan, and Scott, Foresman series.) There are even thesauruses written for children. A set of encyclopedias saves trips to the library; the *World Book* is an excellent resource for older elementary school children, since it's easier to read than most other encyclopedias. An atlas and a globe can also be useful.

- **Your presence**

  Generally speaking, the younger the child, the more likely it is that he or she will get down to work if you are nearby. You shouldn't have to hover over your child during every minute of every homework session, but if he or she is at the kitchen table while you're preparing dinner, or at the dining-room table while you're reading the newspaper in the next room, the opportunities for distraction will be fewer. And you'll be around to answer questions and provide encouragement. Older children with a proven track record of doing their homework without constant supervision can be allowed to study in their rooms or another place of their choosing, as long as it meets the criteria outlined above.

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APPENDIX T

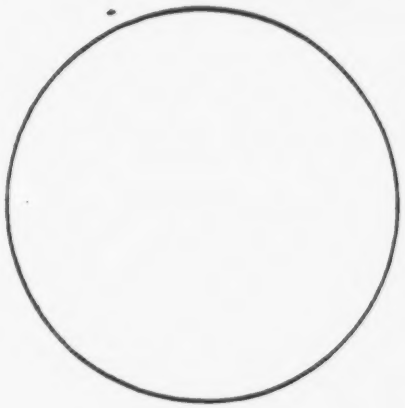
S.O.S. SPOT

S.O.S. Spot

You and your family should decide on a place that you can put your backpack when you arrive home from school.
Your teacher suggests that the S.O.S. Spot be a doorknob or a hook by the door that you exit every day to get the bus for school. You will design a door sign to mark this special place that is reserved for your backpack. If you have younger brothers and sisters at home, your parents may want to place a hook out of their reach.

Directions:

Design your door sign.



Where is your S.O.S. Spot at home?_____
I promise to put my backpack here every day when I come home.
My name_____**My parents'name**_____
Comments:_____
_____
_____

APPENDIX U

S.O.S. RAP

"Tune of Three Blind Mice"

S.O.S. Rap

S. O. S. (clap)

S. O. S. (clap)

Strengthening Organizational Skills

Strengthening Organizational Skills

At Home, on the bus,

At School, or at play,

Just remember your skills for today.

S. O. S. (clap)

S. O. S. (shout and clap)

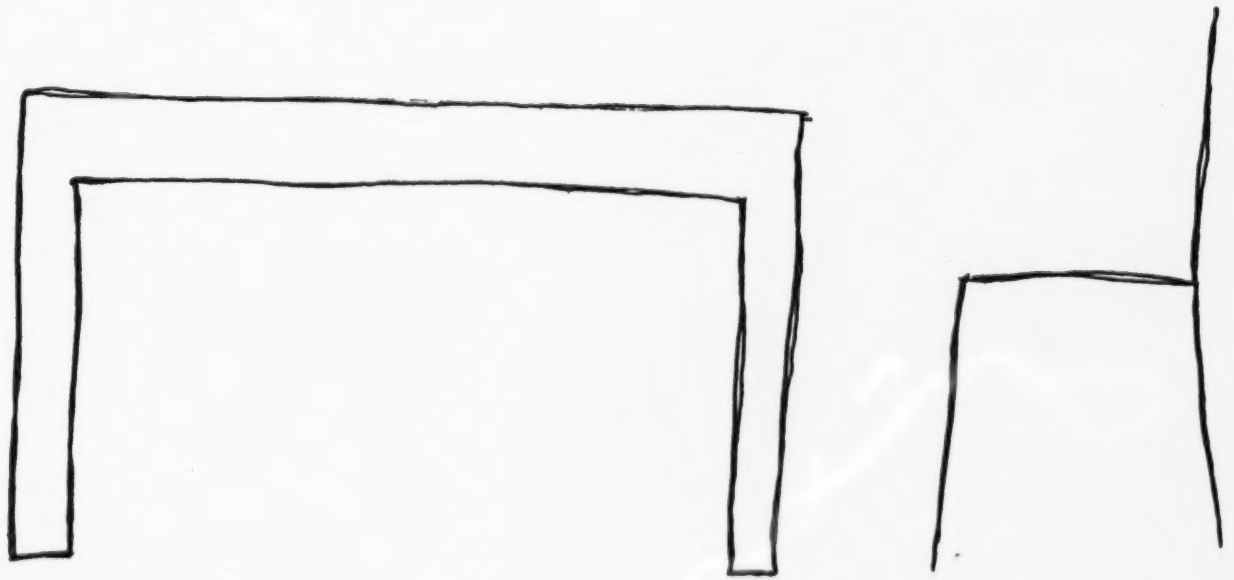
APPENDIX V

S.O.S. WORKBOOK K

107

Strengthening Organizational Skills

Name _____



I will organize my table.

2

APPENDIX W

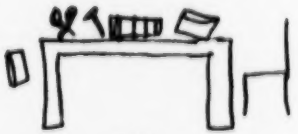
KINDERGARTEN RUBRICS

Name:_____ Rubric for S.O.S.

Date:_____ Organizes Table

1 2 3 4

Needs Work



Ok

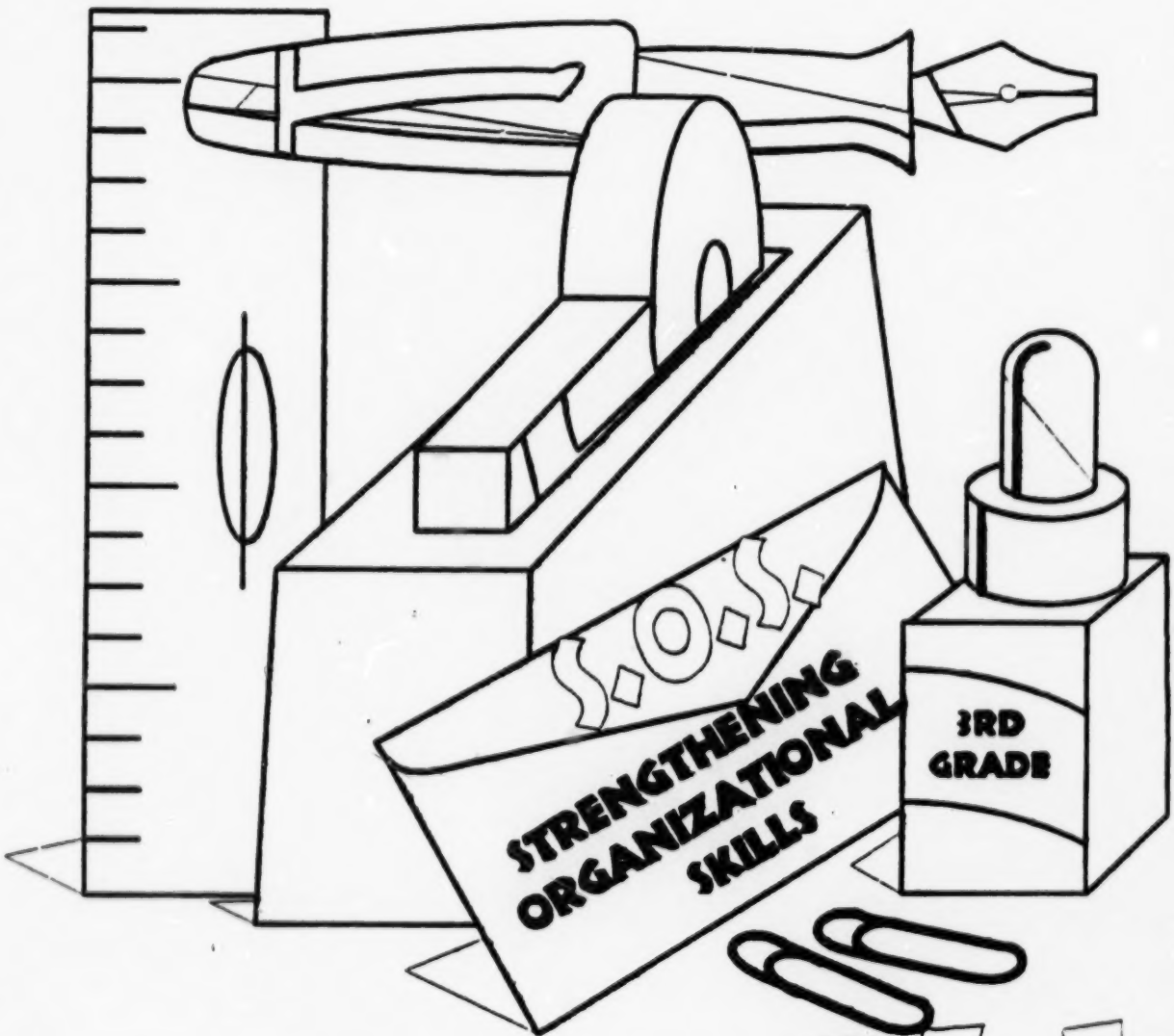
Good

Great!

APPENDIX X

S.O.S. WORKBOOK 3RD

GET ORGANIZED!



BE COOL!

Being Organized

Do you know what these words mean?

Think **silently** of three possible answers or examples and be ready to share them with a partner when the teacher tells you to do so.

Here is a space to fill in the things you can do to organize your school day.

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Reflection:

Share your web with a partner. **Make sure you use a 6" voice so the rest of the class cannot hear your great thoughts.** Together write a definition of being organized.

Being Organized means_____

_____

_____

_____.

Partner #1_____ **Partner #2**_____

Our class definition is:_____

_____

_____

_____.

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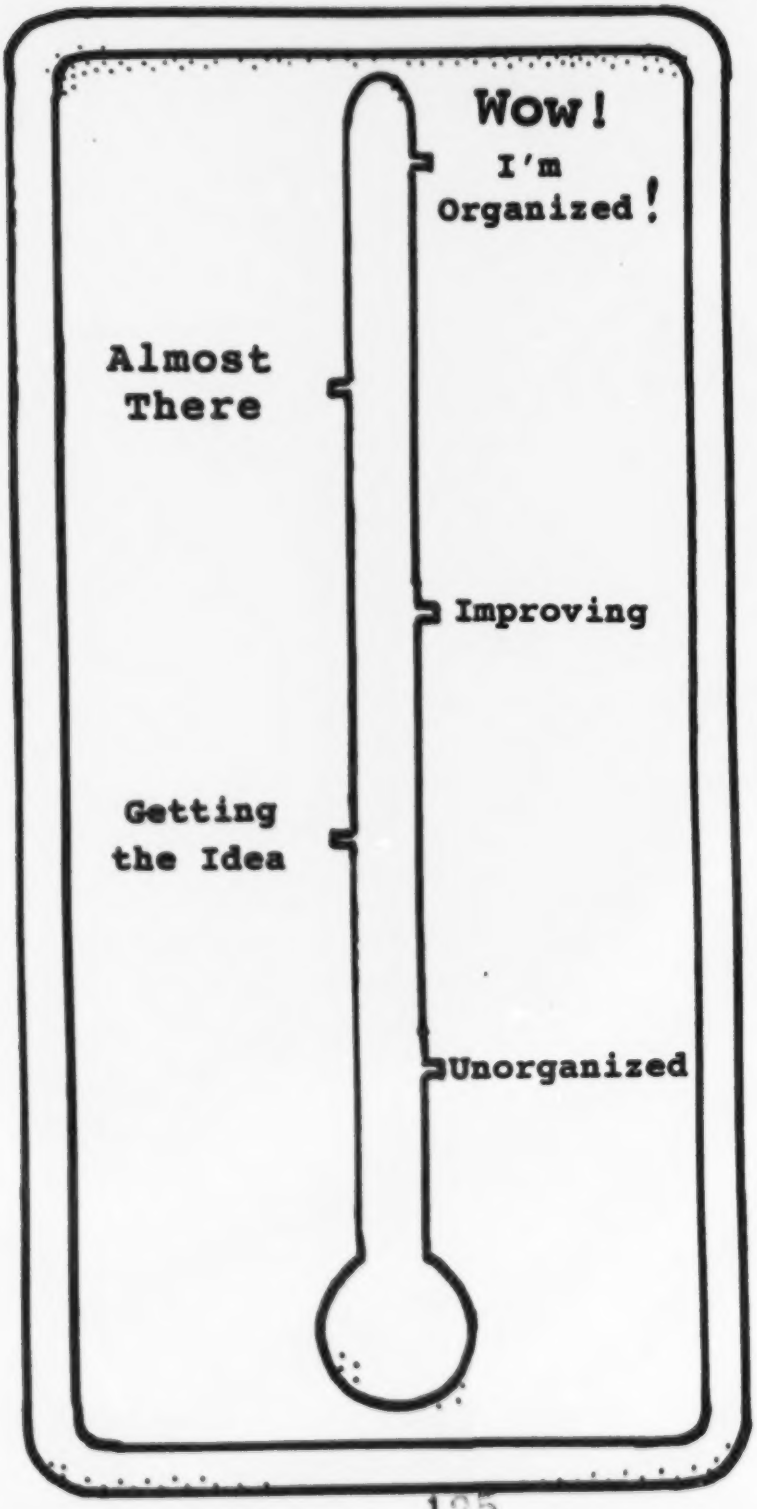
APPENDIX Y

S.O.S. THERMOMETER

S.O.S. Goal Thermometer



APPENDIX Z

PARENT LETTER K/3 (AUG)

Dear Parents, September 1996

This is going to be an exciting year for all of us. We are looking forward to new challenges and adventures in learning for the children, as well as the parents and the teachers.

One adventure that we're embarking on and wish to share with you is our Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership Project entitled Strengthening Organizational Skills (SOS). We are working on a Master's Degree in Education from St. Xavier University.From time to time throughout the year we will be requesting your assistance in completing surveys and/or checklists that you will need to return to school. We will be sending home suggestions and/or helpful hints regarding the implementation of organizational skills at school and at home.

If you do not want the information collected about your child to be included in the project, please notify us. Be assured that lack of participation will not affect your child's grade. We look forward to communicating with you. We know this year will be a year of positive growth and enlightenment for all of us. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us. Thank you in advance for your precious time and effort.

Sincerely,

Miss Sheila Dorsey
Miss Sharon Dorsey
Mrs. House
Mrs. Brito
Mrs. Nauke